

MAY 12, 1976

MORE INDOCHINA REFUGEES TO U.S.

ANNCR:

THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT RECENTLY APPROVED THE ENTRY OF ELEVEN THOUSAND MORE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES NOW IN THAILAND. WITH A BACKGROUND REPORT ON THE WORK BEING DONE TO ENABLE THE REFUGEES TO REACH THE UNITED STATES, HERE IS WAYNE COREY IN THE THAI CAPITAL:

VOICE:

AMERICAN OFFICIALS HERE, SAY THEY EXPECT THE FIRST REFUGEES TO START LEAVING FOR THE UNITED STATES IN COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT NEXT MONTH. WITH MORE THAN SEVENTY THOUSAND REFUGEES ON ITS HANDS, THE THAI GOVERNMENT REMAINS CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THEIR PRESENCE ON ITS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS OF INDOCHINA. AND IT HOPES MORE REFUGEES WILL EVENTUALLY BE ACCEPTED BY THE UNITED STATES.

FOR THE AMERICANS IN CHARGE OF THE REFUGEE PROGRAM, THE NEWS THAT ELEVEN THOUSAND MORE CAN GO TO THE UNITED STATES IS DEEPLY SATISFYING, AND IT OBVIOUSLY HELPS TO RELIEVE THEIR EMOTIONAL BURDEN AS THEY TRY TO COORDINATE PLANS FOR THE REFUGEES' FUTURE. ACTUALLY, SEVERAL AGENCIES ARE INVOLVED WITH THE REFUGEES, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE, AND AMERICAN VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS WHICH PROCESSED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES IN THE HECTIC DAYS AND WEEKS AFTER SAIGON FELL TO THE COMMUNISTS LAST YEAR.

THE FIRST TASK OF AMERICAN OFFICIALS NOW IS TO INTERVIEW THOSE WHO MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES. THERE ARE THREE CATEGORIES: THOSE WHO HAVE RELATIVES ALREADY IN THE UNITED STATES, THOSE WHO ARE FORMER U.S. GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AND THOSE WHO WORKED FOR OTHER GOVERNMENTS. AMERICAN OFFICIALS HERE SAY THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM IN SELECTING ELEVEN THOUSAND PEOPLE WHO FIT INTO ANY ONE OF THOSE CATEGORIES. THEIR ELIGIBILITY WILL BE DETERMINED DURING EXTENSIVE INTERVIEWS THAT WILL BEGIN NOW. AT THE SAME TIME, VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN THE UNITED STATES MUST FIND SPONSORS FOR THE REFUGEES BEFORE THEY CAN LEAVE THAILAND.

A MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO DO GO TO THE UNITED STATES WILL BE LAO BECAUSE ACCORDING TO THE THAI INTERIOR MINISTRY, THERE ARE NEARLY SIXTY THOUSAND OF THEM HERE COMPARED WITH ABOUT ELEVEN THOUSAND CAMBODIANS AND ABOUT FIFTEEN HUNDRED VIETNAMESE. IN ADDITION TO PROCESSING THOSE REFUGEES IN CAMPS SCATTERED AROUND THAILAND, AMERICAN OFFICIALS SAY THEY EXPECT TO INTERVIEW SEVERAL VIETNAMESE FAMILIES STILL LIVING IN THE BOATS THEY USED TO FLEE FROM SOUTH VIETNAM. THE BOATS ARE ANCHORED IN THAI PORTS, AND THE FAMILIES HAVE NOT BEEN PERMITTED TO COME ASHORE BECAUSE THAILAND WAS TRYING TO DISCOURAGE INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM COMING HERE. THEIR PLIGHT IS PROBABLY MORE DIFFICULT THAN THAT OF THOSE IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS, BUT THEY ARE ALSO THE RECIPIENTS OF HUMAN KINDNESS. THAI POLICE AND CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN GIVING THEM FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES TO MAKE THEIR VIRTUAL DETENTION IN THEIR SMALL BOATS

MORE TOLERABLE.
GH/PBM